

VZCZCXRO4824
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHNR #0824 0861013
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 261013Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5238
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0007
RUEHDR/AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY 5901
RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI PRIORITY 5206
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY 2730
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 1982
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2756
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 2685
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 000824

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/26/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: FORMING KENYA'S CABINET PREDICTABLY CONTENTIOUS

REF: A. RANNEBERGER - FRAZER TELCON OF 03/25/08

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 798 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Ranneberger for reasons 1.4 b and d.

Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Disagreement over the size and composition of President Kibaki's cabinet has delayed the final step needed to form Kenya's coalition government. Forming a cabinet was never expected to be a neat or easy exercise, according to our political contacts, so this delay comes as no surprise. Former lead mediator, Kofi Annan, has remained engaged and is supposed to call Kibaki from New York on March 26 to advocate resolution of this delay. In a separate matter, Parliament has adjourned until April 15 to undergo training and in-processing. This is not a reflection on the delay in naming a cabinet. End summary.

Horse Trading Over Cabinet Posts Continues

[1](#)2. (C) Disagreement over the size and composition of President Kibaki's cabinet has delayed the final step needed to form Kenya's coalition government. Assembling a cabinet was never expected to be a neat or easy exercise, according to our political contacts, so this delay comes as no surprise. Prime Minister-designate Raila Odinga explained to the Ambassador on March 25 that Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU) insists on creating 44 ministries and in keeping all the major cabinet posts for itself. New posts for Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) would be created by dividing up the portfolios of minor ministries (in effect, making them even more "minor"). ODM, on the other hand, has proposed that the number of ministries not be expanded beyond [1](#)34. While ODM proposed that PNU could keep security-related ministries, it has insisted that other major posts be shared. Odinga told the Ambassador that he met with Kibaki for 2.5 hours on March 25, an hour of which was in private, but that "no progress" was made. ODM spokesman Salime Lome told Polcouns on March 26 that USG intervention may become necessary because Kibaki's stance was that further compromise was "not possible."

[1](#)3. (C) Odinga also told the Ambassador that he spoke to Kofi Annan on March 25, who reportedly expressed surprise that

Kibaki was not more forthcoming. Annan is supposed to call Kibaki from New York on March 26 to advocate resolution of this matter. Odinga asked the U.S. to weigh in as well. The Ambassador assured Odinga of our continuing commitment in support of the political process and that we would weigh in as necessary depending on the results of the Annan call.

In Unrelated News, Parliament Adjourns

¶4. (SBU) On March 25, Parliament adjourned until April 15. Parliament had been in special session to pass the constitutional and statutory acts needed to create the office of Prime Minister. Having completed that task, parliamentarians will spend the interim in training (over 60 percent of all members are freshman) and taking care of administrative chores and in-processing. The adjournment is not a reflection on the delay in naming the cabinet, political observers tell us.

Comment

¶5. (C) Kibaki and PNU hardliners may need pressure from the USG and others to make reasonable accommodation on sharing major cabinet posts, because every indication is that they are largely to blame for the problem. While ODM's leaner government approach is appealing, political realities and the importance of forming a government may require a somewhat more bloated structure. End comment.

RANNEBERGER